

Carrigaline Baptist Church Constitution

Formed 10th January 1987

This local church is known as the Carrigaline Baptist Church, and our purposes are;

1. To provide for the spiritual growth of believers through worship, teaching, fellowship and pastoral care.
2. To seek earnestly to spread the gospel of God's Grace, persuading others to believe in Jesus Christ as their only Saviour and Lord.

Basis of Doctrine

1. HOLY SCRIPTURES

We believe that the Scriptures, as originally given, were inspired in every detail by God, and ever since by His particular care and providence have been kept pure. They are, therefore, authentic and the church's only authority in all matters of faith and practice.

The Holy Scriptures consist of those 66 books, excluding the Apocrypha, which together make up the Old and New Testaments.

2 Tim.3:15-16; 2 Pet.1:19-21; 2 Samuel 23:2; Jn.17:17.

2. THE TRUE GOD

We believe that there is one living and true God. He is Sovereign and the creator and sustainer of all things. He is almighty, eternal, holy, loving and merciful; yet he hates sin and will not overlook guilt or spare the guilty, but is perfectly just in executing judgement.

Three divine persons constitute the Godhead: The Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each is fully God and yet the Godhead is one and indivisible. They are equal in every divine attribute and execute distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption

Jn.4:24; Ps.147:5; Heb.3:4; Rom.1:20; Ex.15:11; Is.6:3; Mt.28:19; Jn.15:26; Jn.10:29-33; 1Cor.12:11; Gen.17:1; Ex.34:6-7; Deut.6:4; 1Cor.8:6; 1Tim.1:17; Jn.14:11; 2Cor.13:14.

3. JESUS CHRIST

We believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God; his virgin birth and his real and sinless humanity; his death on the cross and his bodily resurrection and ascension into heaven.

We look forward to the bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ at his second coming.

Jn.1:1,14; Lk.1:27,31,35; Heb.2:14; 4:15; 1Cor.15:3-4; Acts 1:9-11; Rom.8:34; Tit.2:13.

4. HUMANITY

¹We believe in the creation of humanity, male and female, by God and in the image of God, equal in value and complementary in role; the creation ordinance of marriage as the life long, exclusive union between one man and one woman. This one-flesh union establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and woman.

Genesis 1v26-27; 2v24; Ephesians 5v22-25; 31-32

5. FALL OF MAN

Man was originally formed after the image of God, but rebelled against God at the instigation of the devil and by his own free will. He became wicked, producing children in his own likeness. Hence, by the propagation of this vicious nature all people are corrupt. Therefore, all men are conceived in sin and are by nature children of wrath, incapable of salvation through good works, and are prone to evil, dead in sin, and under the just judgement of God.

Gen.1:27; 3:1-6; Rom.5:12,19; Ps.51:5; Is.53:6; Rom.3:9-18; Eph.2:1-3; Rom.1:18; Gal.3:10; 3:22.

6. WAY OF SALVATION

It has pleased the Lord to make a covenant of Grace, in which he freely offers salvation through Jesus Christ to sinners. This salvation is wholly of grace through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God; who according to the will of the Father, assumed our nature, yet without sin; honoured the divine law by his personal obedience, and by his death made a full atonement for our sins.

Ez.36:26-27; Jn.3:16; Eph.2:5; 1Cor.3:5-7; Acts 15:11; Heb.12:24; 2:9; Phil.2:6-7; 2Cor.5:21; Is.53:4-5; Heb.7:25.

7. REGENERATION

This is the change brought about in a life by the Holy Spirit, by which a new nature is implanted and the person becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus. It is evidenced by a changed pattern of thinking and lifestyle.

Jn.3:3,6; 1Pet.1:23; Jam.1:18; 2Cor.5:17; Eph.4:22-24

¹Statement on *Humanity* added at a members meeting 24.2.19

8. REPENTANCE

This is a personal act, prompted by the Holy Spirit, consisting in a Godly sorrow for sin as offensive to God. It is seen in a sincere hatred of sin and an abandonment of all that is evil and unholy. Since no one is sinless in this life repentance needs to be often repeated.

Mt.3:2,8; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 20:21; Is.55:7; Acts 17:30; 1Jn.1:8-9.

9. FAITH

Faith is a gift from God and is the medium through which Christ is received by the soul as it's Saviour.

Rom.5:1; Heb.11:6; Rom.4:3; Jer.17:7; Rom.3:22.

10. JUSTIFICATION

God freely justifies those whom he effectually calls by pardoning their sins and accepting them as righteous. This he does for Christ's sake alone. Christ's righteousness is reckoned to their account and those thus justified receive and rest by faith on Christ's righteousness.

Acts 13:39; Rom.5:1,9.

11. ADOPTION

All justified persons are numbered among God's children. God's name is put upon them; they receive the spirit of adoption and are thus enabled to cry "Abba, Father." They are cared for by God as by a father. He never casts them off, but as they remain sealed to the day of redemption they inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.

Rom.8:14-16; Gal.3:26; 4:6-7; Eph.1:5; 1Jn.3:1; Ps.103:13-14.

12. SANCTIFICATION

This is the process by which we are made partakers of God's holiness. Sin's mastery is broken and the evil desires to which it gives birth are increasingly weakened and overcome. This extends to every part of man and yet remains incomplete in this life.

1Thess.4:3; 5:23-24; 2Cor.7:1; Phil.2:12-13; Eph.4:20-32; 5:1; Rom.7:21-23; Jn.17:17-19.

13. PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

All those truly regenerate, being born of the Spirit, will not utterly fall away and perish. They will endure to the end, being kept by the power of God until they come to the enjoyment of heaven itself.

Jn.6:39; 8:31; 1Jn.2:27-28; 3:9; 5:18; 2:19; Mt.13:20-21; Rom.8:28-30; Phil.1:6; Heb.13:5 Jn.10; Jn.17; Rev.2:3; 3:11-12.

14. THE DEVIL

The devil is a personality, who is the enemy of God and the deceiver of mankind.

Mt.4:3-11; Job.1:6-12; Eph.6:10-12; 2Cor.4:3-4; Gen.3:1-6.

15. MAN'S STATE AFTER DEATH

The bodies of men after death return to dust and suffer decay, but the soul is immortal. The souls of the righteous are received into heaven where they are with Christ. The souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torment and utter darkness. Soul separated from their bodies are in either heaven or hell.

Gen.3:19; Ecc.12:7; Lk.16:23-24; 23:43; Acts 13:36; 2Cor.5:1-6; Jude 6-7.

16. RESURRECTION

At Christ's second coming all the dead will be raised and united to their souls forever. The bodies of the unrighteous will be raised to dishonour, while the bodies of the righteous will be raised to honour.

Job 19:26-27; 1Cor.15:42-43,51-52; 1Thess.4:17.

17. THE LAST JUDGEMENT

God has appointed a day in which the world will be judged in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom the Father has given all authority and power to judge. At that day the apostate angels will be judged; so too will all persons, both righteous and unrighteousness, who have lived on the earth.

Jn.5:28-29; Daniel 12:2; Mt.12:36; 25:31-46; Acts 17:31; Rom.14:10-12; 2Cor.5:10; Mt.25:14-30; 41-46; Mk.9:48; Rom.9:22-23; 2Thess.1:7-10.

18. ORDINANCES

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the church.

Baptism is the immersion of a believer in water on a profession of faith in Christ, administered in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To the person baptised it is a sign of his identification with Christ's death and resurrection, and of his being engrafted into Christ. The only persons who can rightly submit to this ordinance are those who actually profess repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Lord's Supper is an ordinance to be observed by his church as a remembrance of his death until he comes again. It is to be administered using bread and wine as symbols of the body and blood of Christ.

Mt.28:19-20; 1Cor.11:23-24; Acts 2:41; Rom.6:1-7.

The Church

We believe there is only one true church, the body of Christ, of which he alone is the head, comprising all in every place who trust in him for salvation. *1Cor.12:12-13, 27; Col.1:18; 1Cor.1:2.*

The local church consists of Christians who have come together for worship, teaching, fellowship and witness according to the New Testament pattern.

Church Government

Two permanent offices are recognised within the church, that of elder and deacon. *Acts 14:23; 6:1-6.*

Elders

It is our desire to have at least one full time elder supported financially by the church. Adequate provision should also be made for his retirement through an agreed pension scheme with the church. *1Cor.9:14; Lk.10:7.*

There will a minimum of two elders, where possible, and subject to Biblical qualifications this number will increase as the church grows.

The qualifications for eldership are set forward in 1Tim.3:1-7 and Tit.1:5-9. These passages are to be read and explained to the church whenever someone is being considered for eldership. An elder may only be removed from office should he neglect his duties, be guilty of sinful behaviour, fall into doctrinal error or hold views contrary to our basis of doctrine. If an accusation is made against an elder the directions of 1Tim.5:19-21 are to be followed. An elder will be removed from office following an 80% majority vote at a special church members meeting. At least 70% of the voting membership must be present and voting for the vote to be valid. ²*Any members who are absent from the church and living in another area (for reasons of study or work) will be deducted from the total voting membership.*

Function of Elders

The elders are responsible to God for the spiritual life of the church. This involves giving themselves to prayer, teaching God's word and caring for all members. They are to oversee all church meetings, interview applicants for membership, maintain discipline and recommend to the church the appointment of additional elders and deacons.

Appointment of Elders

Recommendations for eldership are made to the church by the existing elders. A month shall be left for objections to be raised and questions asked. An 80% majority vote shall be required to confirm the appointment, but unanimity is regarded as the ideal. At least 70% of the voting membership must be present and voting for the vote to be valid. *Any members who are absent from the church and living in another area (for reasons of study or work) will be deducted from the total voting membership.* The appointment of the elder shall then be publicly ratified and he shall be set apart for his duties by prayer and the laying on of hands.

In the event of there being no elders within the church the responsibility for the recommendation of an elder shall rest with an appointment committee agreed by the church. They may seek the help of the elders of a like-minded church in making this decision.

It is the policy of the church to look first within the existing membership for a suitably gifted full-time elder. If no such person is found, the church shall then look to the wider body of Christ.

Deacons

The qualifications for deacons are explained in 1Tim.3:8-13 and this passage is to be explained to the church whenever anyone is being considered for the office of deacon.

Function of Deacons

To administer the business and practical affairs of the church, in order to relieve the elders from these responsibilities. They are also to assist the elders in whatever secular or spiritual ministry which might benefit the life of the church. *Acts 6:1-6.*

²Changed at a members meeting 10.2.97

Appointment of Deacons

The same procedure is to be followed as in the election of elders.

Deacons on appointment may serve for a period of three years, after which time they may be re-elected for further periods of three years.

All who hold office in the church must hold the basis of doctrine and constitution without reservation.

Any who have a teaching function must accept the basis of doctrine and constitution.

Trustees

³The Church Membership will appoint a board of trustees for a fixed term of three years, of not less than three Church members, to comply with legal requirements relating to Charity regulations. Trustees, who are subject to the church's constitution, will be responsible to ensure that Carrigaline Baptist Church complies with the requirements for registering as a charity, ensuring among other things that proper books of account are kept, and that financial accounts and an annual report is submitted to the Charity regulator. Trustees will be appointed by a simple majority at a members meeting, with 3 months' notice given to members prior to the voting. Trustees can similarly be removed from the board of trustees. Trustees shall meet at least once a year to ensure continued compliance.

Ordinances

Baptism

Is to administered only to those who have exhibited repentance from sin and made a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour.

As baptism involves joining the local church it will not normally be offered except in association with membership.

Lord's Supper

Is a remembrance by the believer of his Lord; therefore, it is only to be partaken of by believers who are in present communion with Christ. Great care will be taken in safeguarding the table.

Children and the Ordinances

We recognise the right of children to participate fully in both ordinances. Children who give evidence of personal faith in Christ shall be encouraged to partake of the Lord's Supper and also to be baptised. In both cases it shall be at the discretion of the elders, following interviews with the parents and the child concerned.

Church membership

Shall be open to all who;

- a) Profess repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- b) Have been baptised by immersion and whose lives bear evidence of their Christian profession
- c) Agree that the truths expressed in the statement of faith shall be the rule of the church
- d) Agree to submit to and support the elders and voluntarily enter into the church covenant.

Procedure

- a) The applicant shall be interviewed by the elders in order to determine their spiritual state. Suitable instruction in the church constitution shall be given to the applicant.
- b) After discussion with the church at a members meeting the applicant will be presented to a church meeting where he will both make a statement of spiritual experience and testify to his acceptance of the doctrinal statement and guidelines for church practice and government outlined in the church constitution and covenant.
- c) The church, being convinced that the applicant is called of God to join the church, shall admit the applicant to the church.

Children and Church Membership

We believe that children have a right to become church members, however, they cannot attend member's meetings until the age of 16 and cannot vote until they are 18 years of age.

In order to make membership meaningful each member over 16 years of age is asked to read and show acceptance of the church covenant by signing it.

³Appointment and role of *Trustees* added at a members meeting 24.2.19

Covenant

Recognising our own unworthiness and inability, and in total dependence upon God, we now covenant to give ourselves first to God and then to this local church.

1. That we will endeavour to walk in holiness and brotherly love, being concerned to honour God in our lives and encourage one another to love and good works, to pray for one another and to bear each other burdens.
2. That we will at all times be loyal to each other, being patient with one another's weaknesses and failings, seeking to maintain unity and avoid all causes of division.
3. That we will endeavour to meet together on the Lord's day and at all other meetings of the church as we have opportunity, encouraging one another by our attendance
4. To pray for and encourage the officers of the church in the discharge of their duty.

Discipline of the Church

All members are admitted into the privileges and disciplines of the church. *Heb.13:17*

In matters of personal offence private reconciliation should first be sought. If this fails, the elders of the church should be consulted and if necessary the matter should be submitted to the judgement of the church itself. *Mt.18:15-17*

Believers should not take one another to the civil law, nor should they disturb the peace of the church over personal disputes. *1Cor.6:1-7*

All discipline should be exercised with love and patience, the end in view being the repentance and reconciliation of the offender and the purity and blessing of the church.

If any member accepts or propagates heretical doctrines, or in the event of a member being guilty of such open sin as would bring public dishonour to the Gospel he shall be subject to the censure of the fellowship and in the unhappy event of persistent impenitence, to exclusion from membership. The same will apply in the case of one party in a dispute refusing to be reconciled. *1Cor.5:13*

Any member lapsing from his commitment by being absent from the church meetings over a three-month period without satisfactory reason being given to the elders may have his membership suspended or terminated according to the discretion of the elders. This discipline is to be confirmed at a members meeting and the member concerned shall be informed in writing of the church's action.

Church business meetings

There shall be not less than four meetings per year. All matters except the appointment and dismissal of elders, the appointment of deacons and altering of the constitution shall be dealt with at these meetings. These normal meetings require 40% of the voting membership to be present for voting to be valid.

All the activities and business of the church are to be reviewed at the first business meeting of the new year, including the full-time elder's salary, and a full financial statement is to be presented.

At least 14 days' notice is to be given in writing of any church meeting called, except in an emergency. No new business is to be introduced without prior notice to the church officers. An apology is expected from any member who cannot attend.

All business meetings are strictly confidential; therefore, members are only to discuss business with other church members.

Amendments to Church constitution

Any amendment to this constitution will be made when a minimum of 70% of the voting membership are present and an 80% majority vote is given. *Any members who are absent from the church and living in another area (for reasons of study or work) will be deducted from the total voting membership.*

All members must be given the proposed amendment in writing at least one month before the meeting.

(Changes to Constitution in italics)

Example of Constitution change

If we have a membership of 30 and 4 are either at College or working away then those 4 people will be deducted from the total membership of 30 and the 70% requirement will be computed from 26 voting members, hence 18 members